

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PLAN

December 2001

Midnite Mine Superfund Site Community Involvement Plan Wellpinit, Washington

This EPA Community Involvement Plan identifies community concerns about the Midnite Mine Superfund site. It also outlines opportunities for the public to become involved in future investigation and cleanup activities.

This plan was developed in consultation with members of the community, and can be updated at any time. We are posting it on the EPA Region 10 webpage at <http://www.epa.gov/r10/earth>. If you have questions about the site, this plan, or would like additional information, please call, write, or e-mail:

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(206) 553-0247
E-Mail: sherbina.debra@epa.gov

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Environmental Protection Agency
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This plan contains:

- ☞ Community Concerns
- ☞ Community Involvement Activities
- ☞ Cleanup Activities: Background and Next Steps
- ☞ Health Effects
- ☞ Site Description and Background
 - The Neighboring Community
- ☞ What is Superfund?
- ☞ Site Contacts
- ☞ Appendix: Notes from Community Interviews Held in March and July 1999

EPA encourages meaningful community involvement. The goals of this plan are to:

- ➡ Inform the public of planned and ongoing site activities
- ➡ Maintain open communications about site cleanup, ensuring questions are answered and concerns and conflicts addressed as they occur

- ➡ Provide interested parties with useful information
- ➡ Provide citizens with opportunities to comment on and be involved in technical decisions
- ➡ Encourage and assist local citizens in providing input to agency decisions that will have long-term effects on their community

Community Concerns

Representatives from EPA met with members of the Spokane Tribal Council on October 24, 2001. A public meeting was also held at the Tribe's Longhouse on this date.

In preparation for this update to the Community Involvement Plan, a meeting announcement was mailed to approximately 800 members of the tribe. These meetings help EPA understand community concerns and how residents would like to be involved in the process. In addition, the meetings sometimes provide information which may help the investigation and cleanup. We plan to continue holding public meetings throughout the cleanup process.

EPA recognizes that there may be additional concerns and/or information we should hear. Please feel free to contact Debra Sherbina, Community Involvement Coordinator, at any time to share your concerns or to become involved. **(See Appendix for complete list of comments from the 1999 public meetings).**

Summary of Comments from October meetings:

- ✱ What was used to take samples?
- ✱ How will EPA factor future land use into the cleanup for Midnite Mine?
- ✱ How will EPA factor in background contaminant levels to consider cleanup levels? The "acceptable contaminant background level" will be a crucial number in the cleanup.
- ✱ How will EPA determine which background levels are "pre-mining?"
- ✱ What about using a technology that leaches out radiation?
- ✱ What about all of the jobs lost to the Tribe due to the mine closing?
- ✱ What values are EPA using for consumption rates?

Community Involvement Activities:

Listed below are some of the tools that EPA uses to keep communities informed and involved in the activities at sites. The level of community interest at the Midnite Mine site will be closely monitored and activities will be conducted as appropriate. This list can be updated at any time and

EPA welcomes additional suggestions from community members.

Information Repository:

The purpose of an information repository is to have information available for public review. All technical documents and reports will be placed in the Information Repository at the Spokane Tribe Department of Natural Resources, located on the Ford/Wellpinit Road. Contact Randy Connolly at (509) 258-7709, extension 13 to arrange a review.

Technical Assistance Grants

EPA will provide information on Technical Assistance Grants (TAGs) to all interested parties. A TAG provides funds to citizen groups that are affected by Superfund. Grant money is used to hire technical advisors to help interpret and explain technical materials produced as part of the Superfund process.

Grants up to \$50,000 are available, and require the group to match a local share contribution of 20% of total program cost. EPA recognizes the value of your group's skills and time. The TAG Program allows you to count the value of volunteer services and contributions of supplies toward the required 20% match. Donated office equipment and time, as well as cash, count towards this 20% match. Volunteer services and donated supplies used toward your match are called "in-kind contributions." To receive more information about TAGs, please call Debra Sherbina, EPA Region 10 TAG Coordinator, at (206) 553-0247, or toll-free at 1-800-424-4372, extension 0247.

Workshops

Informal workshops are not planned at this time. However, citizens or the Tribal Council may request a workshop on such topics as: The Superfund Process, Sampling Techniques, Potential Health and Environmental Risks Associated with the Site, and Cleanup Alternatives. If you would like to have a workshop on any subject related to the Midnite Mine Superfund site, please contact Debra Sherbina.

Public Meetings:

Public Meetings will be used to provide updated information throughout the Superfund process and during public comment periods to solicit public input. At this site, public meetings will be held as needed, but at least twice per year. Public meetings will be announced in future fact sheets and notices in the Rawhide Press. Announcements for public meetings during public comment periods will be announced in the Rawhide Press and in the Tribune, in Deer Park. Meeting announcements will be posted at various locations, such as the Post Offices in Ford, Fruitland, and Wellpinit. Also, the community center at the west end of the reservation and the Tribal Center in Wellpinit will be used.

Fact Sheets:

Fact sheets and other materials summarizing site activities and technical documents will be sent to EPA's mailing list. The Tribe has a database of tribal members and will provide EPA with labels

for site-related mailings. EPA will not place Tribal members on the EPA mailing list unless requested.

Web Site:

Fact sheets and other information about the site will be placed on the EPA web page. The web page is at: <http://www.epa.gov/r10earth/>. Once in EPA's site, click on "Index," then click on "M." Scroll down to find "Midnite Mine."

Communication with the Spokane Nation:

The following activities will allow ongoing communication between the Tribe, interested citizens and EPA:

- * EPA will offer Government to Government meetings at critical periods throughout the Superfund process, or as requested by the Tribal Council.
- * EPA representatives will coordinate with the Spokane Tribe's Department of Natural Resources and the designated Superfund Coordinator, Randy Connolly, throughout the process.
- * The EPA Site Manager and Community Involvement Coordinator will work with the EPA Tribal Liaison, Alan Moomaw.

Community Involvement Activities to Date:

A site mailing list has been generated and is being updated on a regular basis. The Tribe will also continue to send mailing labels to EPA for tribal member mailings.

A 60-day public comment period was held following the proposal to add the Midnite Mine site to the National Priorities List.

EPA representatives met with members of the Tribal Council in March 1999 to discuss the site and interview them for the Community Involvement Plan. Their comments have been included.

The Tribe hosted an informational meeting for EPA to talk with tribal members and conduct community interviews in July 1999. Concerns expressed during the July meeting are outlined in the Appendix to this Community Involvement Plan.

Four fact sheets have been distributed: April 1998, July 1999, October 1999, and June 2001.

Notices announcing roadside testing were posted in August 1999.

Public meetings were held in Wellpinit in January 2001 and October 2001.

"Customer Feedback" surveys were sent to the entire mailing list with the June 2001 fact sheet. Nineteen of these forms were returned to EPA, which helped us to see what was working and what

could be improved or changed in our fact sheet communications. Here is a summary of comments and ways EPA will address them:

- Many people felt we should have more public meetings, but almost the same number thought we should only involve the community at significant project milestones. EPA will try to hold two meetings a year at least, and will hold more meetings at significant project milestones or at the request of the community.
- In general, people wanted more details about current and upcoming site activities, and thought defining technical terms was important. Fact sheets provide general updates. We will define technical terms in the fact-sheets and at public meetings. We are also available to provide clarification or additional details at meetings or by phone.
- Most respondents preferred that fact sheets be sent via mail rather than e-mail. EPA will continue to send fact sheets and other written materials through the mail, and will also provide this information on our web page.

EPA's answers to questions posed at the April 2000 public meeting were published in the October and November 2000 issues of the *Rawhide Press*.

The EPA Midnite Mine webpage is updated regularly to include current site documents and contacts.

To ensure effective communication with everyone, additional services can be made available to persons with disabilities by contacting the Community Involvement Coordinator, Debra Sherbina, at (206) 553-0247.

Site Description and Background

Midnite Mine is an inactive open-pit uranium mine eight miles northwest of Wellpinit, Washington, on the Spokane Tribe Reservation. Between 1951 and 1981, Dawn Mining company mined uranium ore at Midnite Mine. Waste rock and piles of ore and protore (lower grade ore) remain on the site. Two pits remain open and contain water; the larger, more contaminated pit is fenced to prevent access. Since 1992, Dawn has been required to collect contaminated water flowing from the mined areas. The water is treated on-site to remove contamination and is discharged to a surface drainage that leads to Blue Creek. Sludge from the water treatment is transported by truck to Dawn's mill, processed to extract uranium, and disposed of in the lined tailings disposal pond at the mill. While this effort has helped reduce the amount of contaminated water leaving the site, a more effective and permanent control is needed to protect human health and the environment.

Due to elevated levels of metals and radio nuclides at the site, EPA listed Midnite Mine on the Superfund National Priorities List of sites eligible for federal cleanup funds in May 2000. The EPA cleanup study is currently underway. This study is called the "Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study" or "RI/FS." Sampling results from monitoring wells that EPA

installed around the site are helping us to understand groundwater flow direction and how the water reacts with chemicals in the rocks. EPA also conducted a radiation survey of potential ore spills along the Ford-Wellpinit Road.

EPA is wrapping up the field work for the study with a few brief visits to the site in the fall of 2001 to measure radon. Data from the sampling of monitoring wells, stream water and sediment, pit water and sediment, surface and subsurface materials, and radiation measurements will be used to prepare a report called the "Remedial Investigation (RI) report." This report will describe how much and what kinds of contamination exist at and near Midnite Mine, and where the contamination is located. It will also include the result of the risk assessments for human and ecological health. From this basis, EPA will develop site cleanup alternatives. EPA expects to issue the draft RI report in late summer 2002.

The Neighboring Community

The Midnite Mine site is approximately eight miles from the town of Wellpinit, Washington. The entire site is located on the Spokane Reservation in Stevens County.

The Spokane Indians are part of the Interior Salish group which inhabited northeastern Washington, northern Idaho, and western Montana for centuries. The word "Spokane" is generally accepted as meaning "Sun People" or "Children of the Sun," although the interpretation is somewhat controversial.

In 1990, the population of the Spokane Indian Reservation was 1,502. Eighty-three percent of the population on the Spokane Indian Reservation are American Indians with the median (mid-range) age of 22 years.

The majority of the houses on the reservation rely on private sources of water, sewage disposal and heat. Approximately 51% rely on water from private wells, 38% have access to a public water system or private water company, and 11% obtain their water from other sources.

Many reservation residents are employed by the logging industry with a few members in farming and livestock.

The Spokane Tribal Council serves as both the legislative and executive branch of the Tribe. The Council consists of a chairperson and three council members.

What is Superfund?

In 1980, Congress passed the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), which was amended in 1986 by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA). These two laws are commonly known as Superfund.

Superfund gives the EPA authority to investigate and clean up releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances. The Superfund process is complex and can take many years to complete. On average, a site can stay on the National Priorities List (NPL) anywhere from six to ten years.

If an immediate problem threatens public health or the environment, EPA has the authority under Superfund to address the situation quickly through a removal action. Removal actions can also be conducted on sites that are not on the NPL using Superfund authority, if they pose an imminent threat to human health or the environment.

The remedial Superfund process includes a detailed investigation at the site by taking samples of soil, water, air and waste. The samples are studied, possible risks to people and the environment are considered, and a range of possible cleanup strategies are evaluated. EPA evaluates the possible cleanup strategies using nine criteria, including public acceptance, and then chooses the best remedy.

The chosen remedy is then designed and constructed. Upon completion of the remedy, there is a requirement to operate, maintain, or monitor the site for several years.

Site Contacts

EPA

Debra Sherbina, Community Involvement Coordinator, (206)553-0247

Elly Hale, Project Manager, (206)553-1215

You may also call EPA toll-free at 1-800-424-4372

Alan Moomaw, Tribal Liaison, (360) 753-8071

For Health Related Questions or Concerns:

Ric Robinson, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry at (206) 553-5114.

Tribal Contacts:

Randy Connolly, Superfund Coordinator, Spokane Tribe: (509) 258-7709, extension 13

Rudy Peone, Director, Tribal Department of Natural Resources: (509) 258-9042

Alfred Peone, Chairman, Tribal Council: (509) 258-4581

Website: <http://www.spokanetribe.com/>

Elected Federal Officials:

Senator Maria Cantwell
c/o Robert Thoms
697 US Courthouse
West 920 Riverside
Spokane, WA 99201
(509) 353-2507

Senator Patty Murray
c/o Judy Olson
601 West Main Ave, Suite 1213
Spokane, WA 99201
(509) 624-9515

Representative George Nethercutt
c/o Don Gillespie
U. S. Courthouse
920 West Riverside, Suite 594
Spokane, WA 99201
(509) 353-2374

Newspapers:

Rawhide Press

PO Box 100
Wellpinit, WA 99040

High Country News

PO Box 1090
Paonia, CO 81428

Tribune

104 N. Main
Deer Park, WA 99006

Documents used to make site decisions are available at the following locations:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Seventh Floor Records Center
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, Washington
Contact: Elly Hale, 1-800-424-4372, extension 1215

and

The Spokane Tribe of Indian Natural Resources
on Ford-Wellpinit Road
P. O. Box 100
Wellpinit, WA 99040
Contact: Randy Connolly, (509) 258-7709, extension 13

APPENDIX

Summary of Concerns From Meetings March 24 and July 22, 1999.

- It is important to include the entire drainage in the investigation. Blue Creek was identified as an important commodity to the Tribe. Camping, fishing and using the water in sweat lodges are some of the ways the Tribe uses the Creek.
- The Spokane Tribe have historically relied heavily on salmon. The Blue and Chimaken creeks begin on the reservation and are used for fishing several different types of fish. The whole fish, including the head and bones, are typically used in stews.
- One tribal member mentioned the stress that members of the tribe feel about the mine. He feels that the mine left a terrible scar and that it needs to be taken care of.
- Some livestock graze around the mine area and there is concern about cattle grazing and taking in any contamination.
- EPA needs to be clear where the site is in the Superfund process. People are going to want to know what is happening and know the facts about what has been found at the site.
- A couple of people expressed concern about who EPA is accountable to. There have been other federal agencies in the past who have come to meetings and have told the Tribe what is going to be done and not ask for input. This has resulted in mistrust about EPA's willingness to involve the Tribe in the activities at the site.
- A couple of people are concerned that the mining company will get away with not having to pay for the cleanup.
- Others are concerned about the length of time it is taking for anything to get done at the site. They feel that there has been a lot of federal agencies involved with very little impact on the actual damage the mine has had. They are concerned that the site is being studied to death.
- One person asked if the route that the trucks have been taking when hauling waste from the mine to the mill will be studied.
- One tribal member who lives off the reservation was not able to attend the meeting and telephoned to express his concerns. The member discovered and used to work out at the mine and does not want to see the mine cleaned up. He feels that the tribe needs it for jobs. He said Blue Creek was contaminated before the mine was active and knows that because he tested the water. He also feels that EPA should not fill the pits at the mine,

because the water in the pits can be used to help with forest fires.

- EPA representatives asked about the best ways to keep the community informed of activities at the site. The Tribal Council suggested using the Rawhide Press and regular public meetings.

The same question was asked at the meeting on the 22nd. Many attendees feel that regular public meetings are a good idea. Also, the Rawhide Press was suggested as a way to notify people about meetings, along with the Indian Country Today. One citizen mentioned the internet and said that would be a good way to keep people up to date on the activities at the site.